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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the four 2002 issues of a quarterly newsletter for Illinois early childhood program directors, providing information on current issues in early childhood education. Regular features in each issue include: "The Director's Toolbox," delineating practical suggestions for directors related to program policies and staff issues; "The Accreditation Corner," detailing procedures for self-evaluation related to accreditation; "Family Friendly Practices," describing early childhood programs especially involved in meeting families' needs; and "Director's Profile," highlighting the accomplishments of early childhood education or care program directors in Illinois. Periodic features include updates on current training opportunities and grant availability, summaries of relevant research, and book reviews. The Spring 2002 issue presents part 1 of an article discussing the Fair Labor Standards Act; the Summer 2002 issue offers part 2. The Fall 2002 issue discusses creating playgrounds that kids love, while the Winter 2002 issue addresses risk management in early childhood programs. (EV)

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Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University

Doug Clark, Editor

2002

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The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University **Spring 2002**

The Fair Labor Standards Act: Do Your Center's Policies Comply?

Part I

By Teri Talan

Tanya is the director of Woodland Child Care Center, a NAEYC-accredited program. She strives to provide a high-quality learning environment for children and a high-quality work environment for staff. She invests considerable resources, both time and money, to improving the educational qualifications and professional orientation of her teaching staff. Currently, Woodland's salary scale identifies different levels of compensation for different levels of education. The job description for a lead teacher requires a minimum of an associate's degree in early childhood education/child development. The personnel policies governing Woodland Child Care Center provide that a lead teacher is a salaried employee. These policies appear to be consistent with the spirit of the current workforce development initiatives gaining momentum across the country. But do these personnel policies meet the letter of the federal law?

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is the federal law providing for minimum wage and overtime pay. Under this law, employees must be paid no less than the minimum wage levels set by Congress (currently $5.15 an hour) and receive time and a half pay for hours worked in excess of 40 hours in any given work week.

The FLSA does provide an exemption from these regulations for certain categories of employees. Section 13(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act exempts any employee "employed in a bona fide executive, administrative, or professional capacity." Unfortunately, the statute does not define these terms; it is left to the Secretary of Labor to do so by regulation.

The Department of Labor has issued two tests that an employee must meet in order to be classified as exempt for the FLSA. The "salary test" provides that an employer must pay an employee on a salary, not hourly, basis. The "duties test" requires that the employee must perform executive, administrative, or professional duties more than 50% of the time at work.

For the early childhood director, deciding whether an employee falls into the exempt "professional" category is not as easy as it might seem. Those staff members that are found to be *teachers* fit within the professional capacity exemption. This begs the question, when is an early childhood teacher a "teacher" under the law?

Federal regulations hold that a teacher is *"a person, employed by a school system, educational establishment or institution, who is engaged in the activity of teaching."* While these regulations specifically state that a "teacher of nursery school pupils" meets the definition of *teacher*, they are silent about a teacher of young children in other early childhood settings. If a teacher holds a teaching certificate, this is considered evidence of meeting the definition of "teacher." However, even employees without teaching certificates may fit within the legal definition if their primary duty is to teach and they have had extensive specialized training in early childhood education.

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Continued from front page

Previously, the Department of Labor has ruled that employees whose primary duty is to care for the needs of children would not fit within the exempt professional category of teacher, indicative of the traditional dichotomy between early care and education. Best practice in early childhood settings means that care and education are inextricably entwined. As early childhood educators, we know that children learn most efficiently when taught by a caring teacher in a nurturing environment. We know that when young children's needs are met (in other words, are well cared for) they learn how to regulate their emotions, cooperate with others, and effectively solve problems.

Until the law catches up with best practices, administrators of early childhood programs should be wary.

While it is possible to argue for professional capacity exemption status for those staff responsible for providing a full day of high-quality early care and education, the burden of proving an exemption rests with the employer making this argument. It is important to realize that under the FLSA any exemptions are subject to the "strict construction" rule. This means that any ambiguity in the law is interpreted in favor of the employee's coverage by the Act. The prudent director needs to wait for further clarification from the Department of Labor or the courts regarding the exempt status of early care and education teaching staff.

Why does it matter if a teacher is classified as an exempt professional employee? The Fair Labor Standards Act helps to ensure that employees receive appropriate compensation by requiring that all non-exempt employees be paid at least the current minimum wage. In addition, non-exempt employees who work more than 40 hours in one week must receive overtime pay (at least one and one-half times their regular hourly pay) for each hour beyond 40. It is this overtime pay requirement, for non-exempt employees only, that can have serious ramifications for the field of early childhood, with the potential for financial loss to both employers and employees.

Once again, consider Tanya. With over 100 children enrolled in six preschool classrooms, there is likely to be at least one teacher absent on a given day. Like most employers in early childhood programs, Tanya has a constant need for substitute teachers. Her employees, like most staff in early childhood programs, struggle to make ends meet from one paycheck to another. At Woodland, the teachers often are asked to substitute for each other to cover routine staff absences. There is usually staff eager to earn extra income. This substitute teaching is, of course, in addition to the teacher's regular hours of employment. Tanya pays for any additional hours worked at the teacher's regular rate of pay.

If teachers are non-exempt employees, the FLSA dictates that they must be compensated at time and a half for time worked beyond 40 hours a week. The majority of center directors could not afford to employ their regular teachers as substitutes because of this additional cost. The teachers, in turn, would suffer from the loss of opportunity to earn extra income. The administration of the program would suffer because it is likely that the director would be the one to cover in the classrooms. In this scenario, the children wind up the biggest losers since the substitutes in the classrooms would no longer be familiar with the individualized needs of the children and their daily routines.

Besides the thorny issue of *exempt* versus *non-exempt* classification for teachers employed in early care and education, there are other challenges for early childhood directors in applying the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. For instance, when should non-scheduled hours at work be considered "working time?" When should an employee be paid for attending meetings or training? What about meals or other break times? Part II of this article will address the "working time" provision of the FLSA.

This article is intended to increase awareness of legal risk and should not be regarded as legal advice or relied on to provide answers to specific problems.

- Department of Labor. (1994). *The Fair Labor Standards Act*, 29 U.S.C. 201-50.
- The Child Care Law Center. (1996, September). The Fair Labor Standards Act and the child care industry. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 82-86.
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The Director's Toolbox

Different Types of Meetings

As a director you spend many hours every month attending meetings – some that you have convened and facilitate, others where you are just a participant. While your meetings may seem quite diverse, they can be grouped into four general categories: informational, professional development, problem solving, and planning.

Informational. As the name implies, informational meetings are intended to transmit information – information about policies, procedures, people, and events. While informational meetings are typically structured as one-way communication, many also include opportunities for participants to ask questions or provide feedback about the information being shared.

Professional development. While similar to informational meetings, professional development meetings do more than merely transmit information. In addition to increasing participants' knowledge base about an issue or topic, professional development meetings also seek to change the behavior and attitudes of participants in an effort to increase their professional competence.

Problem solving. Many of the meetings directors attend or conduct are designed to tackle issues that need to be resolved. The goal of problem-solving meetings is to define the problem, discuss potential solutions, and agree on a course of action.

Planning. Planning meetings are another form of decision-making meetings. The goal in planning meetings is to decide on the sequence and coordination of events or activities - who needs to do what, when, and where. Planning can be short term (assigning tasks and coordinating logistics for an upcoming event) or long term (setting goals and planning strategies for the future).

Some of the meetings directors conduct are a blend of different meeting types. Others may be representative of a single type. The key is to match the type of meeting with the optimal group size, facilitation style, and room setup to achieve the outcomes desired. The following table summarizes some of these elements.

	Informational	Professional Development	Problem Solving	Planning
Who should attend?	Those who need to know the information	Those who need to learn the content	Those who have a vested interest or expertise in solving the problem	Those who have knowledge pertinent to the planning process
Number of participants	Any number	Variable (depends on the topic, desired outcomes, and instructional strategies used)	Optimum 8-15	3-10
Facilitation style	Typically one-way communication from leader to participants, with opportunities for questions	Combination of one-way and interactive, depending on desired outcomes	Interactive, discussion	Interactive, discussion
Room setup	Classroom style or U-shape	Classroom style, U-shape, or boardroom, depending on group size and topic	U-shape, circular, semicircular, or hollow square	U-shape, circular, semicircular, or hollow square
Emphasis	Content	Content and process	Process and outcomes	Process and outcomes
Ensuring success	Good planning and preparation	Voluntary participation, full engagement	Climate of mutual respect, consensus decision making	Preparation, participation, staying focused

Planning Ahead

NLU Courses for Directors

Summer Term begins
July 1, 2002

On-Campus Courses

ECE512 (2 s.h.)
Early Childhood Curriculum

ECE525 (3 s.h.)
(Taking Charge of Change)
Strategies for Supervision & Staff Development

EPS526 (3 s.h.)
(Taking Charge of Change)
Organizational Theory, Group Dynamics, & Leadership

Online Courses

ECE510 (3 s.h.)
Child, Family, and Community

For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Doug Clark at dclark@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7711

Professional Development Opportunities

Leadership Connections
May 2-4, 2002

Last chance to register for this extraordinary conference designed especially for early childhood center directors. Be inspired by national experts and learn creative solutions to the challenges of delivering high-quality early childhood services.

Location: Chicago O'Hare Marriott Hotel

Registration: $325

Conference registration includes opening luncheon and keynote, skill-building clinics, public policy forum, seminars, continental breakfasts on Friday and Saturday, box lunch on Friday, directors' marketplace, networking reception, closing luncheon and keynote, gifts galore, and much, much more.

Fall Management Institute: Outdoor Play Environments

September 27-28, 2002

If you are building a new facility, renovating an existing playground, or looking for ways to extend your curriculum outdoors, this institute is for you. Vicki L. Stoecklin from the White Hutchinson-Leisure and Learning Group and Donna Thompson of the National Program for Playground Safety will be guest presenters.

Location: The Center for Early Childhood Leadership

National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Time: Friday, 8:30 am - 8:30 pm
Saturday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Fee: $199 (includes all institute materials and meals)

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg at eeisenberg@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703

Director's Bookshelf

Bloom, P. J. (2002). ***Making the Most of Meetings: A Practical Guide***
Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons.

Reviewed by Jill Bella

Making the Most of Meetings is written for anyone who has ever attended a meeting, regardless of how productive it was. In her book, the second volume in a management series written especially for early child care directors, Dr. Paula Jorde Bloom offers practical techniques for developing and mastering the skills necessary to facilitate effective meetings. She describes different types of meetings, steps involved in preparing for meetings, and strategies to use when leading meetings.

Bloom begins by asking the reader to consider just how much time they spend in meetings, what they enjoy and dislike most about meetings, and to evaluate their personal investment of time in meetings. This slim, readable volume offers keen insight into complex factors impacting meeting productivity. Readers who have experienced both productive and unproductive meetings can readily identify with the real-life examples provided.

While *Making the Most of Meetings* includes many ideas for improving the structure of meetings such as developing an effective agenda and clarifying roles and responsibilities, Bloom devotes equal emphasis to analyzing and improving meeting processes. She focuses on the group dynamic and the behaviors that support group productivity. She shares the importance of and strategies for establishing ground rules, developing rituals and symbols, accommodating different communication styles, dealing with difficult people, and handling conflict.

As someone who has attended many meetings can attest, *Making the Most of Meetings* provided me with new understanding of a seemingly simple, everyday task. Directors who are committed to improving their management skills will find this book a valuable resource and a catalyst for change.

Making the Most of Meetings is available from New Horizons, P.O. Box 863, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045, (847) 295-8131, $14.95, plus $4 shipping and handling.

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The Accreditation Corner

Immunizations and Child Health Records

Recent media stories reflect the controversy concerning children's immunizations. However, the fact remains that one of the best ways to protect a child's health is with immunizations. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) publishes a recommended immunization schedule and child care providers are required by law to have a current immunization record for each child enrolled in their center. NAEYC accreditation criteria H-3 states "Child health records include:"

- Results of recent health examination
- Up-to-date record of immunizations
- Emergency contact information
- Names of people authorized to call for the child
- Health history such as allergies or chronic illnesses

Vaccines work best when given at the recommended age and at the recommended times. Shots are available free or at low cost through the local health department. Adults should have some of these immunizations as well. The following is a list of immunizations recommended by the IDPH:

- DT&P vaccine protects against Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis. This vaccine is given in a series beginning when an infant is 2 months old.
- Polio vaccine protects against Poliomyelitis. This vaccine is given in a series beginning when an infant is 2 months old.
- MMR vaccine protects against Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (German Measles). This vaccine is given when a toddler is 12-15 months old.
- Hib vaccine protects an infant from serious health problems including meningitis. This vaccine is most effective given to children 2 months of age or older.
- Hepatitis B vaccine protects a child against infection of the liver that is contracted in the first few years of life. This vaccine is given in a series beginning when an infant is 1-2 months old.

Directors and parents can obtain further information about immunizations by calling the *Help Me Grow* hotline at (800) 323-GROW.

Public Policy Update

The present state of early care and education policy in Illinois can be likened to a roller coaster ride that refuses to stop! Since the Governor's budget address in early 2002, state policy has experienced steep drops, sudden twists, and a slow climb back, hopefully, to where the ride started.

The high point definitely occurred in Fejbruary when Governor Ryan announced the launching of *Ready, Set, Grow: Illinois Preschool*. This new program, a ten-year phase-in of universal access to preschool in Illinois, builds and depends on a foundation of adequate funding for state-subsidized child care and the Early Childhood Block Grant.

The implementation plan for universal access to preschool in Illinois will be the focus of a public policy forum on May 2, 2002 at the annual Leadership Connections Conference. The Republican and Democratic gubernatorial candidates have been invited to respond and share their level of support for this important new early childhood initiative. For information about registering for Leadership Connections, contact Jill Bella at (800) 443-5522, ext. 7706, or e-mail at jbella@nl.edu.

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Family Friendly Practices

The Learning Tree

The Learning Tree in Elgin serves over 300 children each day between 6 weeks and 11 years old. This large center houses 17 classrooms and employs 64 teachers and staff. Children are transported from 12 area schools to the center. Mary Muhs is Learning Tree's program director, overseeing the morning preschool, school-age, and summer camp programs.

Mary's primary focus is working with parents. "Our program's success relies on positive, open communication. We speak to parents on a daily basis about the wonderful things their children are doing. We write anecdotal letters about special events and reminders about center policies." In addition, staff at The Learning Tree regularly distribute informational handouts relating to different areas of the curriculum and children's development.

Children attending The Learning Tree were not shielded from news of the events of September 11, 2001. As they asked questions of their parents and teachers, they began to focus on what they could do to help the people of New York and Washington D. C. As a natural extension of the autumn tradition of making caramel apples, the children decided to sell their apples and donate the funds to the American Red Cross 911 fund.

With excitement, the children created posters advertising the sale, handled the money transactions, and bagged the apples. Then on October 11th, the children paraded with an American flag to the local fire station and delivered a gift box complete with caramel apples and th[illegible]ards. Mary states, "Helping th[illegible]f September 11th awaken[illegible]spirit within all of us."

Director's Profile

Kathy Jo Williams Reaching Out to Chicago's Southwest Suburbs

Picture this scenario – you live in a beautifully wooded area in a house your family has occupied for four generations. You are able to walk to work and your early childhood program is housed in the same elementary school building that you, your children, and your father all attended. This is not a flight of fantasy, it is the real life tale of Kathy Jo Williams, Administrator of Southwest Suburban Montessori in Palos Park.

Kathy earned a BA in elementary education from St. Mary of the Wood College. While teaching first grade she became intrigued by the Montessori approach to education. She later attended Meca Seton American Montessori School in Hinsdale and received her preprimary certificate and administrator's credential. Since 1980, Kathy has served on staff at Southwest Suburban Montessori, first as a teacher and now administrator.

Southwest Suburban Montessori serves 150 children ages 2-6 and was the first Montessori school in Illinois to become NAEYC accredited. The school was recently awarded re-accreditation for a fourth consecutive term. The daily schedule includes a foreign language component and comprehensive art and physical education programs. Field trips to plays, exhibits, and nature activities round out the curriculum.

The school is widely recognized within the community for welcoming children with special needs. Kathy acknowledges that while the recent inclusion of children with downs syndrome, spina bifida, and profound hearing loss have presented many challenges, the positive outcomes have been worth the extra effort. Kathy's "family-friendly" approach also includes a regular menu of evening parent education workshops.

Kathy draws much of her energy from being with the children. She is a strong advocate for the Montessori approach. "Montessori is a marvelous way to begin learning. We begin with the basics (such as hand washing), and break down the tasks into multiple steps. As a child learns and becomes independent and self-confident, we move on to the next step. With this approach a child is not afraid to try new things."

As a participant in *Taking Charge of Change* Cohort #8, Kathy found her return to the classroom as a student both challenging and rewarding. She is currently enrolled in *The Next Step*, an advanced leadership training program that is preparing her to become a professional growth advisor for the Illinois Director's Credential and mentor for accreditation facilitation.

Kathy is a NAEYC validator and an American Montessori consultant. In a mentoring role, Kathy welcomes students from Moraine Valley Community College, Trinity College, and Meca Seton to her school and supervises their internships. In her leisure moments, Kathy expands her world through extensive reading and traveling. At home, she also enjoys needlepoint – an art form from an ancient century.

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Summer 2002

The Fair Labor Standards Act: Do Your Center's Policies Comply?

Part II

By Teri Talan

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is the federal law providing for minimum wage and overtime pay. Under this law, employees must be paid no less than the minimum wage set by Congress (currently $5.15 an hour) and receive no less than time and a half pay for hours worked in excess of 40 hours in any given work week. Part I of this article (The Director's Link, Spring 2002) discussed the circumstances in which an employee of an early childhood program fits within the "professional" category and is therefore exempt from the overtime provisions of the FLSA. In that article I tackled the thorny question of when is an early childhood teacher a "teacher" under the law? This follow-up article will address what is meant by "working time," that is, the time for which all nonexempt employees of an early childhood program must be paid.

Anna is an experienced director of a new center with a licensed capacity of 60 children. She has just completed her hiring of the teaching staff, paying close attention to scheduling as a means to both quality and cost control. Anna knows how difficult it is to staff classrooms for school-aged children with well-trained, consistent teachers because of the part-time hours typical of after-school programming. Rather than compromise on the quality or consistency of the staff in the after-school program, she decided to hire only full-time staff, willing to work a split shift. Joe and Miranda were hired to work in a preschool classroom from 7:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and in the school-aged classroom from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. They are both nonexempt employees. They each have two years of college; Joe has 10 semester hours of credit and Miranda has 18 semester hours of early childhood education college credit. Both are paid for working 40 hours a week. Anna is concerned about whether the creative way she scheduled Joe and Miranda's time might conflict with the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Anna has good reason to be concerned. Like most early childhood directors, she does not have specific knowledge of how the labor laws and regulations should inform the management of an early childhood program. Further, the Fair Labor Standards Act is difficult to understand as it pertains to employers as well as employees. The "working time" provision has been interpreted by the Secretary of Labor and by the federal courts to include any time spent by a nonexempt employee that benefits the employer. Problems can arise when employers such as Anna fail to recognize certain hours as paid working time.

Because measuring work time is key to enforcing the FLSA, there are often disputes over the services employees perform before and after their shifts, away from their work sites, and during travel between work sites. Are non-scheduled hours at work ever considered "working time?" What about the lesson planning teachers do at home? Are breaks and meal periods "working time?" When must travel time or training time be paid as "working time?" What, exactly, is meant by "working time?"

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In-service training

One common mistake child care employers make is not paying their employees for the time they spend in training required by the state licensing regulations to maintain the center's license. For example, if Joe and Miranda attend training on a Saturday or in the evening to help fulfill the annual 15-hour professional development requirement prescribed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), they must be paid for their time spent in training. This professional development time clearly benefits the employer. If Joe and Miranda worked their regular 40 hours in the week they attended this training, they need to be paid overtime, at least time and a half, for all hours worked beyond their regular 40 hours.

Meetings and training

When employees are required to attend parent or staff meetings, this is "working time" and must be paid. When employees are required to attend special events such as fundraisers or holiday parties outside of regular hours, this is also viewed as "working time." When employees attend training programs or lectures, this is not considered to be "working time" only if four conditions are met: 1) the employees are attending the event outside of their regular working hours; 2) the employees are attending voluntarily; 3) the event is not directly related to the employees' jobs; and 4) the employees do not perform any work for their employers while at the event.

Lesson planning

Lesson planning is work time. If the employees of a child care center do this work outside the regular workday, even if performed off-site, it must be paid. If the work schedules Anna has arranged do not include planning time, the actual time the staff spends preparing the classroom or planning the curriculum must be paid. Again, this time needs to be paid at the overtime rate if the total hours worked in a given week exceed the 40-hour maximum.

Non-scheduled hours

One difficulty for Anna in scheduling a split shift is the unscheduled time in between the two shifts. If Joe or Miranda stays on-site during this time preparing materials, planning curriculum, or coordinating activities with co-workers, this is work time. Therefore, it must be paid and is quite likely to result in overtime pay. The law is clear that employees are not allowed to volunteer their time or services to their employers. On the other hand, it is not "working time" if employees choose to show up early for work and read the newspaper until their scheduled work begins.

Travel time

The general rule is that the time an employee spends traveling to or from work is not "working time." However, time spent traveling between two program sites of the same employer is considered "working time." If an employee takes children to or from school, this is work time and must be paid at the appropriate rate.

Breaks and meal periods

The Fair Labor Standards Act does not require that lunch or rest breaks be provided. However, most employers do build breaks into their employees' work schedules. Must the time given for meals or breaks be paid time? The answer to this question depends on whether the time primarily benefits the employee or employer. If the employer requires the employee to stay on the premises during a meal break, or if the break is shorter than 30 minutes, then the break is considered to promote workplace efficiency and, therefore, be for the benefit of the employer.

If you think the FLSA is uneven in its treatment of employers and employees, you are correct! More than 50 years ago, in *Roland Electric Co. v. Walling, 326 U.S. 657, 670* (1946), the Supreme Court stated: "the purpose of the Fair Labor Standards Act is to raise living standards." Today, the FLSA serves the same general purpose. Given the woefully inadequate compensation paid to the early childhood workforce, perhaps it is time to look at the FLSA as a tool to help increase compensation and stabilize the workforce.

This article is intended to increase awareness of legal risk and should not be regarded as legal advice or relied on to provide answers to specific problems.

- Department of Labor. (1994). *The Fair Labor Standards Act*, 29 U.S.C. 201-50.
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Teri Talan is Public Policy Liaison for the Center for Early Childhood Leadership. She holds a law degree from Northwestern University and is formerly the executive director of an NAEYC-accredited program in Evanston.

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Planning Ahead

NLU Courses for Directors

Fall Term begins
September 17, 2002

On-Campus Courses

ECE512 (2 s.h.)
Early Childhood Curriculum

ECE593 (2 s.h.)
Seminar: Early Childhood Education

EPS500A (3 s.h.)
Human Development with a Focus on Early Childhood

FND503 (3 s.h.)
Historical and Philosophical Foundations in Early Childhood

Online Courses

ESR506 (2 s.h.)
Graduate Research: Interpretive/Critical

For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Doug Clark at dclark@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7711

Professional Development Opportunities

Fall Management Institute: Outdoor Play Environments

September 27-28, 2002

If you are building a new facility, renovating an existing playground, or looking for ways to extend your curriculum outdoors, this institute is for you. Vicki L. Stoecklin from the White Hutchinson-Leisure and Learning Group and Donna Thompson of the National Program for Playground Safety will be guest presenters.

Location: The Center for Early Childhood Leadership

National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Time: Friday, 8:30 am - 8:30 pm
Saturday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Fee: $199 (includes all institute materials and meals)

Participants may receive 1 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE544) by paying an additional $235 and participating in an online follow-up exercise.

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg at eeisenberg@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703

The Next Step

October 24-26, 2002

The *Next Step* is an advanced leadership training program designed for seasoned early childhood professionals. The training focuses on building coaching and mentoring skills, increasing cross-culture sensitivity, enhancing presentation skills, and preparing participants to become Illinois Director Credential professional growth advisors and NAEYC accreditation mentors.

Space is limited to 15 participants. Experienced directors of NAEYC-accredited centers, college instructors, supervisors of multi-site programs, consultants, and early childhood leaders are encouraged to apply. Follow-up retreats will take place February 20-22, 2003 and at Leadership Connections in May 2003.

Location: The Center for Early Childhood Leadership

National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: $350, includes housing, food, books, and all training materials

Participants may receive 4 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE545 and ECE546) by paying an additional $940. Application deadline is August 1, 2002.

Grant$ Update

The Center for Early Childhood Leadership was recently awarded a professional development grant by the W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation. The award will be used to underwrite a third cohort of *The Next Step*, an advanced leadership training program for early childhood professionals. The training is designed for experienced center-based program directors, college instructors, consultants, and other leaders in the field of early childhood education.

A convening management institute is scheduled for October 2002 and follow-up retreats will take place in February and May 2003. The purpose of *The Next Step* is to assist participants in developing coaching and mentoring skills, increasing cross-culture sensitivity, enhancing presentation skills, and preparing to become Illinois Director Credential professional growth advisors and NAEYC accreditation mentors.

The Accreditation Corner

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

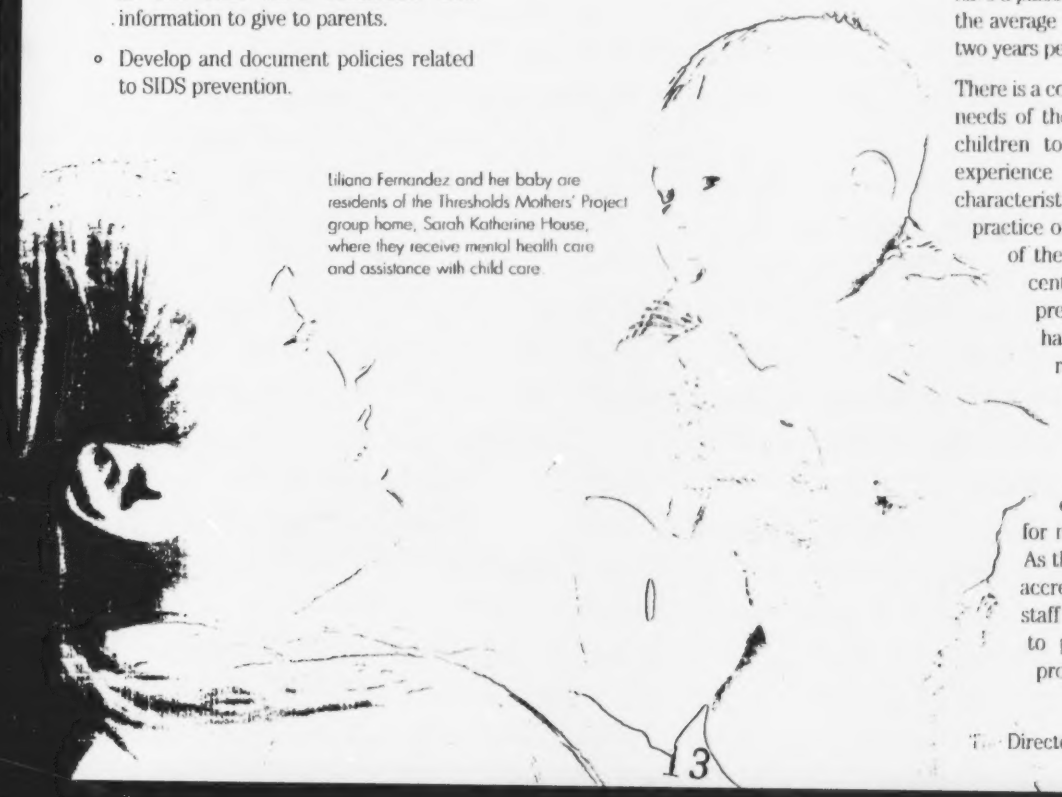
As many centers expand their programs to include infants, caregivers must be educated about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is the sudden, unexplained death of a healthy infant. It usually occurs during sleep and often affects newborns. It is the major cause of death in children from birth to one year of age. African-American and Native-American babies are over represented in the 3,000—5,000 SIDS deaths in the United States each year. An infant is 2 to 12 times more likely to die of SIDS when sleeping in a prone position (on his or her stomach).

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, 20% of all SIDS deaths occur when children are in non-parental care. To reduce the risk of SIDS caregivers must:

- Always put infants to sleep on their backs and educate parents about safe sleeping positions for SIDS prevention. Inexperienced caregivers may feel pressured by parents who desire to have their infants placed on their stomach in the crib. Have reminders and information to give to parents.
- Develop and document policies related to SIDS prevention.
- Have procedures in place for exceptions. Require written confirmation from a physician if a health condition or birth defect requires the infant to sleep in a prone position.
- NAEYC accreditation criteria H-16b states: Sides of infants' cribs are in a locked position when cribs are occupied.

To find out more about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, contact the NICHD web-site at www.nichd.nih.gov. You can also order free "Back to Sleep" materials from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development by calling 800-505-CRIB. These materials include a parent brochure and a parent training video available in English or Spanish, crib stickers, and take-home cards.

Adapted from Accreditation Update, Vol. 3, No. 1, Winter 2002, a publication of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.



Liliana Fernandez and her baby are residents of the Thresholds Mothers' Project group home, Sarah Katherine House, where they receive mental health care and assistance with child care.

Family Friendly Practices

Thresholds Mothers' Project

Thresholds Mothers' Project is the nation's largest service provider to mentally ill adults. Founded as a grant-funded initiative 25 years ago, Thresholds has blossomed into a 45-site agency operating throughout greater Chicago. Having added an early care and learning component to its menu of services, the Thresholds center in Chicago's Lakeview community is pioneering new territory. In this unique dual-service outreach, all the infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in the program are the children of the Thresholds' adult clients. The center's mission is to help mothers develop parenting skills and maintain custody of their children. It is, in the words of Principal Jim Geidner, "the mom's last hope." He goes on to say, "If they are unsuccessful here, then the children are removed from their parent's custody."

Besides mental health services, Thresholds provides it's clients with vocational training, parenting skills-building, and on-site housing. Like other Thresholds sites, the mothers and children of the Lakeview site reside in group homes in the surrounding neighborhood. They are welcome to stay free of charge for as long as they need. According to Geidner, "Most of the mothers have been bounced around from shelter to shelter... at Thresholds they finally have a place to call home." Jim estimates that the average residential length of stay is about two years per family.

There is a constant balancing act between the needs of the mothers and the rights of the children to have as normal a preschool experience as possible. The distinguishing characteristic of the Lakeview site is its practice of involving firsthand the mothers of the children in the early childhood center. For 37 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, the children's mothers have been integrated into the daily routines of the early childhood program. Jim calls this the "cornerstone" of a program that is one-of-a-kind. It is the innovative way that Thresholds offers care, education and hope for mothers and their children alike. As they are actively pursuing NAEYC accreditation, the entire Thresholds staff are living out their commitment to providing a quality child care program.

Director's Profile

Alpha Jackson Artist and Center Director

What do an aspiring artist and an early childhood program director have in common? They are one in the same if you are Alpha Jackson. Alpha is the Early Head Start Services Manager for the Catholic Charities of Joliet. His work at Catholic Charities began two years ago when he was called there to create the program from scratch. Today the program, known as the Feldman Center, serves families of children between 18 months and three years old.

Along with the Early Head Start program, Alpha has nurtured the development of a family child care program as well as services for expectant mothers. He recently organized a male involvement conference with US Congressman Danny Davis as featured speaker. In Alpha's words, "we've now added the fatherhood component."

Before coming to the Feldman Center, Alpha's career record was impressive, but it's a unique twist of fate that may be the most remarkable part of his story. As a graphics communications major, Alpha was enrolled at Columbia College in the mid-1980's. As part of the field-training experience required by the College, he was assigned to Chicago's prestigious Leo Burnett advertising agency. As it turned out, one of Burnett's clients was The Boys & Girls Clubs, and much of Alpha's work was dedicated to that account.

Realizing the unique opportunity for community outreach, Alpha's supervisors suggested that he volunteer on behalf the agency to give art lessons on Saturday mornings for youngsters at the McCormick Boys & Girls Clubs on Chicago's north side. Alpha quickly realized his true calling. "I was hooked," he said about the fulfillment he received from the work with his young students. Without the slightest hint of regret in his voice, he states it plainly: "I gave up my career as an artist... and the rest is history."

In no time, Alpha's role grew from Saturday-morning volunteer to part-time instructional educator, and then to a full-time position as Individual Services Director at McCormick. During his four years of service in that capacity, he mentored wayward youth who had been appointed by the courts to do community service. "My job was to help them grow in self-esteem, in self-discipline and in responsibility," he says.

Since entering the field of early childhood through one of its many side doors, Alpha has worked as director of the Marcy Newberry Association Head Start, Child Care, and School-age program overseeing 150 children. He has also worked for the Duncan YMCA, a center that serves about 100 families of 3-5 year olds. During his five years at Duncan, Alpha hosted such high-profile visitors as First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Vice President Gore.

Today, after two successful years at the Feldman Center, Alpha's aspirations are still lofty. He is presently guiding the program staff through NAEYC self-study and is pursuing a master's degree in Early Childhood Administration at NLU. Recently, he was selected to receive a Johnson & Johnson Fellowship, an opportunity for advanced management training that takes place this summer on the campus of UCLA. As far as the future is concerned, Alpha would someday like to build a program "from the ground up" as he puts it, "...one with a focus on art and music education."

So whatever happened to the budding artist? Alpha still stays active as a free-lancer and as a regular exhibitor at major Chicago art fairs. It could be said that wherever he's been, Alpha Jackson has left his mark. The halls of the Feldman Center surely provide the proof. Adorning the walls throughout the building, Alpha's works in oil and pen and ink express his appreciation for multi-cultural experiences in the lives of children. The atmosphere is artistic, or as Alpha would say about his contributions, "it gives us a real art flavor."

LEADERSHIP Connections
May 2-4, 2002 • www.nl.edu/ecel

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May 8-10, 2003

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The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University

Fall 2002

Creating Playgrounds Kids Love

By Vicki L. Stoecklin

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When adults are outdoors, they admire a healthy lawn, a nicely tended vegetable garden, and beds of beautiful flowers. When children are outdoors, they're crawling under bushes, digging in dirt and climbing anywhere their legs and sense of adventure will take them. This is why outdoor areas designed by adults often fail to delight their intended audience. When we give children what they want, as opposed to what adults think they want, those outdoor play areas look entirely different than the traditional playground.

Early childhood experts know that children learn best through free play and discovery. Children's free play typically is pleasurable, self-motivated, imaginative, non-goal directed, spontaneous, active, and free of rules imposed by adults. Quality play involves the whole child—gross motor, fine motor, senses, emotion, intellect, individual growth, and social interaction. The traditional school or neighborhood playground can meet only a fraction of those needs.

Today, the lives of children are more structured and supervised, and their physical boundaries have shrunk. Concerns for safety, an increase in latchkey children, and an overabundance of scheduled activities keep children from the joys of free play. Childhood and outdoor play are no longer synonymous. This makes playgrounds at schools and child care facilities especially important, as they are often the only outdoor activities that children experience.

What Nature Gives to Children

Just as children need positive adult contact and a sense of connection to the wider human community, they also need positive contact with nature and the chance for solitude and the sense of wonder that nature offers. The natural world is essential to the emotional health of children. Studies show that children's early experiences with the natural world are linked with the development of imagination and the sense of wonder, important motivators for life-long learning. Children, when they play in nature, are more likely to have positive feelings about each other and their surroundings.

There is much evidence that concern for the environment is based on a love and respect for nature that only develops when children have unsupervised, unregulated contact with it. It is children's developmental tendency to empathize with the natural world. To nurture that tendency, children need free access to a natural area in which they can spend an extended amount of time.

Small children consistently prefer the natural landscape over built environments. What nature gives them is qualitatively different from what they get from indoor environments. The sensory experiences are different, and they have a freedom to run and shout and get messy—things that are frowned on indoors. Natural environments offer unlimited diversity, and they have a feeling of timelessness. The landscapes, trees, rivers, and ravines described in fairy tales and classic childhood stories still exist today.

It's all about sensory experiences. The best manufactured equipment designed by the best educators in the world can't substitute for the sensory pleasure children experience when they build a trench in the

Continued on page 2

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Continued from front page

dirt, squish sand or mud between their toes, or feel the wind beneath their imaginary wings as they swing from the branch of a tree. Even the most expensive playground structure can't compete with the magical moments that children experience when their attention is captured by the sparkle of sunlight through the leaves, the sight of butterfly on a playmate's shoulder, or the nonstop activity of a colony of ants.

Designing Outdoor Spaces Children Love

The goal of designing children's outdoor play environments is to use the natural landscape and vegetation in the play setting and nature as much as possible as the core elements of the space. The natural environment needs to read as a children's place, a world separate from adults, one that responds to a child's own sense of time and place. We call places like this discovery play gardens to distinguish them from traditional playgrounds.

In designing outdoor spaces, it is important to take from children and to recognize how the adult point of view is different. Adults prefer manicured lawns and tidy, neat, uncluttered landscapes. Children, on the other hand, value more natural landscapes and the adventure and mystery that comes with hiding places and wild, spacious, uneven areas. They also appreciate animals, creatures in ponds, and other living things, as well as different levels and nooks and crannies, and places that provide shelter, shade, privacy, and views. Discovery play gardens should provide that, along with openness, diversity and opportunities for manipulation, exploration, and experimentation.

A discovery play garden requires a lot of gear to make it work. This doesn't mean designed gear like swings or slides, but elements like sand, water, props and naturally found objects that allow children to control and manipulate the environment. The structures in play gardens, as much as possible, should be made of natural materials such as logs, stumps and boulders, and should use the landscape in natural ways with berms and mounds.

Good use of plants is also vital to a discovery play garden. Vegetation can create a special feel that separates one play area from another, like putting interactive water play in a bog or stream habitat. Incorporating local vegetation can also help children appreciate their community's environment.

Outdoor play areas should flow from one area to the next, be as open-ended and simple as possible, and encourage children to use their imaginations. The space needs to be perceived by children as their space, rather than adults' space. It is also important to have continuity between the outdoor and indoor space, so that transition between the two is almost seamless and the outdoors is seen as an extension of the classroom rather than a retreat from it.

A New Way of Designing Outdoor Play Areas

Discovery play gardens don't cost any more to build than the old-style, pave-it-and-plop-it playgrounds. *Where* the money is spent is very different, however. Rather than spend most of the budget on conventional manufactured playground equipment, moneys are shifted to landscaping and creating play areas using natural materials. And, because they require specialized design skills, a higher percentage of the budget should be spent for professional design services than with an old-style playground.

New kinds of outdoor play, while they don't require more money, do require more involvement from the people who will play in and care for the discovery play garden. Having children, teachers, parents and maintenance staff participate in the design process is essential. Involving children will ensure that they feel the garden is their special place. Involving teachers helps ensure they'll feel ownership and use the discovery play garden as an outdoor classroom. Involving parents helps ensure their support and shows them how natural space (and messy play) supports their child's development. Involving maintenance staff helps ensure that they will provide the support and assistance needed to maintain the environment.

Discovery play gardens offer children chances to explore the environment and experience the sense of wonder that comes with interacting with nature, animals, and insects. They are environments that encourage children's rich and complex play beyond what they normally experience in traditional playgrounds. Children's discovery play gardens are places where children can reclaim the magic that is their birthright—the ability to learn in a natural environment through exploration, discovery, and the power of their own imaginations.

The Director's Link is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois. If you have received more than one copy of this newsletter, please share it with a colleague. Address corrections should be directed to:

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Vicki L. Stoecklin, M.Ed., is the Education and Child Development Director for Hutchinson Leisure & Learning Group, a design and consulting company. You can contact Vicki at (816) 931-1040 (www.whitehutchinson.com.)

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The Director's Toolbox

Is Your Playground a Safe Place to Play?

Use this simple checklist to help make sure your local community or school playground is a safe place to play.

- ☐ Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
- ☐ Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
- ☐ Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- ☐ Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
- ☐ Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
- ☐ Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
- ☐ Check for dangerous hardware, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
- ☐ Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
- ☐ Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
- ☐ Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they are safe.

Source: Consumer Products Safety Council, Document #327 www.cpsc.gov.

FALL MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
Outdoor Play Environments
September 27-28, 2002

This institute is for administrators who are building a new facility, renovating an existing playground, or looking for ways to extend their curriculum outdoors. Vicki L. Stoecklin from the White Hutchinson-Leisure and Learning Group and Donna Thompson of The National Program for Playground Safety will be guest presenters.

All training sessions will be held at the Center for Early Childhood Leadership training center on the Wheeling campus of National-Louis University. For more details, log on to www.nl.edu/cecl.

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NLU Courses for Directors

Winter Term begins
January 13, 2003

Online Courses

ECE515 (3 s.h.)
Financial and Legal Aspects of Child Care Management

EPS500A (3 s.h.)
Human Development with an Emphasis on Early Childhood

ESR507 (2 s.h.)
Graduate Research: Empirical/Quantitative

FND503 (3 s.h.)
Historical & Philosophical Foundations in ECE

For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Doug Clark at dclark@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7711

Professional Development Opportunities

Directors' Technology Training

Rockford Cohort, March - April 2003

The goal of Directors' Technology Training is to improve the computer skills of early childhood administrators and increase their access to management resources through the Internet. This training is made possible by funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and is conducted by faculty from the Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University.

During this seven-day training experience, participants will become familiar with a common set of tools and templates to manage their early childhood programs more effectively using Microsoft Office. The training is limited to 15 participants and priority is given to directors whose programs serve IDHS-funded children. Participants will learn fundamentals of Internet and e-learning, computer hardware and software, word-processing, spreadsheets, and presentation graphics.

When: March 25, 26, 2003, April 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 2003
8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Where: NIU Rockford
8500 East State Street, Rockford, IL

Fee: $65, includes all course materials

Participants may earn 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE534) by paying an additional $470.

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg at eeisenberg@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703

Center Receives Grant for Family-Friendly Directors Training

Thanks to a grant from the AT&T Family Care Development Fund, the Center for Early Childhood Leadership will host a winter management institute for early childhood administrators on February 28 - March 1, 2003. During this Family-Friendly Directors training, participants will examine the social, economic, and technological factors impacting families in contemporary society. They will be guided to explore ways to make their centers a part of a community-wide support system for parents. Training emphases include developing a family-responsive mission statement and creating marketing literature that promotes a positive family-responsive image.

All sessions will be held at the Center for Early Childhood Leadership training center on the National-Louis University Wheeling campus. The institute is open to directors from all types programs and the cost for both days including training materials and food is $199. In addition, participants may also earn 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE582E) by completing follow-up assignments and paying an additional $470 for tuition. This credit is applicable to the core competency requirements of the Illinois Director Credential and the NLU master's degree in Early Childhood Administration.

Fifteen early childhood administrators whose centers serve AT&T families will be selected to attend the Family-Friendly Directors institute at no cost. They will also receive follow-up technical support on-site at their centers and a quality enhancement grant to implement program improvements. In addition, they will receive at no cost three additional days of training in conjunction with the Leadership Connections statewide directors conference May 8-10, 2003. For more information about this professional development opportunity, contact Eileen Eisenberg, Training Coordinator, at (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703, or by e-mail at eeisenberg@nl.edu.

The Accreditation Corner

Playground Safety

NAEYC accreditation standards stipulate that outdoor settings should allow children to work or play individually, together in small groups, or in large groups. These six keys to playground safety will help you ensure that children get the most from their outdoor learning and playing space.

1. **Children are carefully supervised.** The play area should be monitored by adults who have knowledge of injury prevention and first aid. Adults should set reasonable, appropriate rules for what children may do.
2. **The space arrangement adds to children's safety.** Accreditation guidelines call for a minimum of 75 square feet of play space outdoors per child. Play areas should be inaccessible to streets, standing water, and other hazards. Natural boundaries or fences help keep children from wandering off and unwanted visitors from entering. Equipment should be designed for a range of ages and abilities, and it should be installed with safety in mind.
3. **Equipment is sturdy and engineered for safety.** The placement, size, height, and complexity of equipment must be tailored to the children who use it. For example, climbing equipment should not be taller than the children who climb.
4. **Landing surfaces are resilient.** Playground equipment should never be placed on concrete or asphalt. Installing resilient surfaces under these danger zones can prevent playground injuries, a third of which occur as a result of falls.
5. **Routine maintenance is scheduled and budgeted.** Parts of equipment that move should be checked and repaired regularly. Beware of open hooks, sharp edges, or missing points. Surfaces underneath play equipment should be replenished or raked so that a depth of 8 to 12 inches is always maintained.
6. **Appropriate choices are offered.** Children's bodies are at work when they play outdoors practicing and learning new skills. Equipment that moves allows children to create their own action and encourages role playing.

Playgrounds that are carefully designed, supervised, and maintained will help promote physical development, encourage friendships, and set the stage for learning about the world.

Family Friendly Practices

Happy Time Education Center

Happy Time Education Center has been serving the child care needs of Mt. Vernon since 1972. Owner and director Nan Pangarkar and her staff are committed to advancing the quality and accessibility of child care to the local and surrounding communities. They believe that high-quality child care and education enables children to develop to their fullest potential and provides an essential support for their families. According to Nan, "In our center, every child and family is part of our learning community and is treated with the highest degree of concern and respect."

A hallmark of the Happy Time program is its collaboration among staff, families, and local organizations to provide regular parent education opportunities. Held at the center with presentations by the county health department, families and staff attend class together. As Nan puts it, "We do this, so we're all on same page." Free child care is also provided during class time.

Nan's family education focus on children's health not only supports healthy child development, but also creates a connecting point between center staff and families. "I believe we should initially begin with topics that are universally accepted regardless of moral or cultural beliefs. An example of this is childhood nutrition," she says. "Once we gain a comfort level and familiarity with each other, we can approach other more sensitive topics that relate to family or cultural values."

Nan's 20 years as a program director has led her to key observations about fostering positive relationships with families. "Many parents don't know where to go for guidance or they don't feel comfortable asking for assistance," she says. "Even when they seek support, we must resist telling them how to parent. Instead we need a collaborative approach that begins with an open discussion about needs and concerns. There are so many different cultural standards regarding how to best raise children. We need to adjust our communication accordingly."

Director's Profile

Lazetta Farnham Strong Ties to Family and Community

As a teenager, Lazetta Farnham knew with certainty that she wanted a career in early childhood education, so after high school graduation she earned a degree in Child Care and Education from Richland Community College in Decatur, Illinois. From there, she went on to earn a baccalaureate degree in Child, Family and Community Services from the University of Illinois at Springfield. Five years later, she returned home to Richland Community College not only as an alumna, but as director of RCC's Child Care Learning Center.

Thanks in no small part to Lazetta's personal commitment to serving and supporting families, the Learning Center is known for its tradition of providing culturally sensitive, parent-responsive, community-focused child care. The mission of the Child Care Learning Center is to provide "high-quality educational and affordable developmentally appropriate child care services for students, faculty and staff... to enable parents to accomplish their educational goals as well as provide an informative and positive role model."

Typical of a community college, the majority of students at RCC are non-traditional. The average age is 31. The Child Care Learning Center, sitting in the Illinois heartland, serves families from four major cultural and linguistic groups. Many of the parents who use the center receive assistance through displaced worker, workforce development, or public aid. All of the families have one thing in common—they are returning to school to improve their skills and abilities to support themselves.

Under Lazetta's leadership, the Child Care Learning Center has created a program that is community responsive in ways of vital worth to its clientele. The center implements and participates in projects that extend beyond the families in the center itself, creating a real sense of community that encompasses the entire college. Practices that have been developed to meet the needs of individual children have been extended to inform and support the broader community.

One family-responsive project grew out of Lazetta's concern for a young girl who was unable to express her feelings. Drawing on her broad professional experience, as well as her interests as a crafts hobbyist, Lazetta created a doll whose face could be changed to express different emotions. Because of its effectiveness with this child, Lazetta "mass-produced" the doll and has incorporated it into other classrooms at her center. She has also used the doll project to help parents and early childhood practitioners outside the center understand and address the emotional needs of children.

Besides her work as administrator of the Child Care Learning Center, Lazetta is also a member of the college faculty at Richland. She teaches courses in school-age child care, children's literature, and music, art, and drama for young children. She has found her 19 years of service on a college campus rewarding in unique ways. "Some of the children who came to our center as four-year olds are now here as college students!" she says. When sharing the recent experience of enrolling the daughter of a former preschooler at the center, Lazetta beamed "I can't tell you how wonderful that was!"

A great deal of Lazetta's success as a champion for families and community can be traced to her hometown roots in nearby Dalton City and to strong family ties. She and her husband are volunteers with their son's Boy Scout troop, where they especially enjoy the camping and canoeing outings. They are also active as a family in the activities of the *Paublo Agricultural Museum*, an organization built to preserve and promote agriculture. Lazetta is a leader in the children's ministry programs at their church, and is an avid reader. "I'm a big believer in family-oriented activities," she said. In her career and at home, Lazetta's commitment to families and community couldn't be more obvious.

LEADERSHIP Connections
May 8-10, 2003 • www.nl.edu/cecl

Registration opens October 20, 2002 *look for a brochure in your mailbox*

Leadership Connections
Chicago O'Hare Marriott
May 8-10, 2003

Don't miss out on this highly acclaimed professional development opportunity for early childhood leaders.

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- Meet and learn from national experts in leadership and program management.

Contact your local CCR&R about professional development funds to sponsor your attendance at Leadership Connections.

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The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University **Winter 2002**

Risk Management Plans In Action: Is Your Program Ready?

By Douglas Clark

The events of last September 11 are a somber reminder of how crucial it is for early childhood programs to have a well-tailored risk management plan in place. As reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, real-life response measures taken at two child centers near ground zero offer dramatic proof that emergency plans can be much more than a written document or series of building evacuation drills.

Having a written risk management plan means that a center has taken action to prevent disasters from occurring and has prepared for emergencies by developing the procedures needed to respond to and recover from a crisis when it does occur, thereby reducing the impact on both people and property.

The basic elements of disaster preparedness are: prevention, preparation, response, and recovery. In other words, preparedness is about understanding the risks, trying to alleviate those risks, and getting ready for potential crisis.

The most critical aspect of disaster preparedness is planning – allowing time to assess the current situation at your center and preparing for a variety of emergency scenarios. It is essential that all involved in the management of the program support the development of the plan as a critical document for the center to have in place and that risk management planning remains high on the priority list within your overall strategic plan. In fact, many of the tasks involved in preparing an effective risk management plan are useful as good management practices in other aspects of your operation.

There are a variety of ways of describing the basic elements of preparedness, but perhaps the simplest way is to separate a crisis into three stages: *before* an emergency, *during* an emergency, and *after* an emergency. Each of these stages should be considered while drafting a risk management plan.

Taking Steps to Prepare and Prevent

Before a crisis occurs is the time for assessment. Your assessment should involve a close look at your center and its current situation – those present in the building at various times throughout the day as well as the facility itself. What poses a risk? What can you control and what is out of your hands? What steps do you need to put in place to address all the identified problems?

Continued on page 2

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This time of assessment before a disaster strikes is also the time to recognize potential threats to your center that are out of your hands – severe weather emergencies, industrial accidents, fire, vandalism, etc. The nature of these threats should be considered and the possible scenarios imagined – what would, or what could, the center staff do in these situations? What steps could be taken in response to one of these threats? What equipment would be needed, and what help could you get?

Responding During a Crisis

At this stage, the disaster is actually occurring. All your preparation is about to pay off. The risk management plan developed during your planning and preparation exercises will have identified all the steps to be taken during a disaster. If it is a storm warning, do you have to shelter all children, visitors, and staff? Do you need to make sure all the defenses against flooding are in place? Is it a bomb threat? Use that sheet of instructions by the phone. A fire inside the building? The plan will show the locations of all the fire extinguishers and building exits. A "priority list" will detail which objects should be saved, if possible, in the order of significance. If this part of the plan is thoroughly researched and prepared, but also kept simple, it could well prevent a minor disaster from becoming a major one.

Recovering After a Crisis

The disaster has occurred and the center responded well. No one was injured, but substantial damage to your facility has occurred. How will the center and staff recover from the disaster and damage? If you have prepared well, your crisis response team will know what to do and have the resources at hand. The first 48 hours after a disaster are perhaps the most critical; prompt, effective action will limit further damage.

In preparing for a disaster, knowing what to do in response to most types of disasters is of utmost importance. The building must first be declared safe to work in. Who will do this? What must be done to prevent further damage from occurring? Insurance issues will arise. Calls for assistance will have to be made and perhaps even the media will be involved. These matters, and others, can be identified in the preparation stage of your planning. All the appropriate steps should be decided in advance.

Assembling the Written Plan

After your planning, once all the material is collected and the writing is complete, it will form one main document – your center's risk management plan. Keep copies of this plan both at your center and off-site with members of the crisis response team. Be certain that everyone has ready access to the written plan and use it frequently as a training tool to familiarize your staff with proper response techniques.

It is important that all those involved in the management and daily operation of your center – board members, staff, volunteers – have a chance to read and comment on the plan **before** it becomes an official document. It is these people who will have to use the plan in the case of a disaster. They must have a sense of "ownership," otherwise they may not be committed to implementing it. Everyone involved must understand and agree to their own role in disaster response and recovery and, ideally, to everyone else's! At a minimum, they must agree to recognize the authority of those given responsibilities within the crisis response team. Then, should the need ever arise, it will simply be a matter of using your plan to guide you through those most critical and challenging of days.

Douglas Clark is an assistant professor in the Early Childhood Administration program at National-Louis University and is Communications Coordinator for the Center for Early Childhood Leadership.

"Success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go."

William Feather

The Director's Link is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois. If you have received more than one copy of this newsletter, please share it with a colleague. Address corrections should be directed to:

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The Director's Toolbox

On-line Law Library

Looking for information about a specific issue related to employment law? Check out these web sites for helpful on-line resources.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year for certain family- and health-related reasons. For general information about employee eligibility, benefits during leave, returning to work after leave, and record keepingrequirements, see **www.dol.gov/elaws/fmla.htm**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) provides rights and protections for participants in group health plans. For general information about the HIPAA laws relevant to pensions, health insurance plans, and other employee benefits, see **askpwba.dol.gov/faq-compliance-hipaa.html**

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a state-federal partnership, financed by two different employer taxes. At the state level, agencies collect quarterly employer contributions (taxes) in order to pay unemployment benefits to eligible, unemployed workers. For contribution rate determinations, quarterly filing requirements, and "fast facts" for Illinois employers, click on **www.ides.state.il.us/employer/uitax/index.htm**

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) provides temporary continuation of health insurance coverage to terminated workers at group rates offered through employers. For information about employer requirements, benefits entitlements, and premium payments, see **askpwba.dol.gov/faq-compliance-cobra.html**

The Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) is a federal law that governs all employee benefit programs. ERISA sets uniform minimum standards to assure that employee benefit plans are established and maintained in a fair and financially sound manner. For more details, link to **www.dol.gov/dol/topic/retirement/erisa.htm**

The **Child Labor** provisions of the **Fair Labor Standards Act** are designed to protect children 18 years and under from work conditions that are detrimental to their health and well-being. For information about age restrictions, work hours, and wage standards, see **www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/index.htm**

Minimum wage and overtime laws are included in **The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)**. For information that applies to both the employer and employee about employee classification and wage standards, see **www.dol.gov/asp/programs/handbook/minwage.htm**

The Illinois Human Rights Act addresses employment in relation to civil rights. For information about hiring and firing practices and treatment of employees and discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or age, see **www.state.il.us/dhr**

The Personnel Records Review Act applies to personnel records and materials maintained by employers. To find out about the conditions under which an employee has the right to review, copy, append, and correct personnel records, or to learn more about employer handling of staffing records, see **www.state.il.us/agency/idol/GA/cpRecord.htm**

Equal Employment Opportunity Laws are the federal laws that prohibit job discrimination. Among them are Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (EPA) the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). For more information, see **www.eeoc.gov**

IRS Rules for Hiring include information related to Employer Identification Numbers (EIN), wage reporting, employment eligibility determination, and record-keeping requirements. All necessary publications and forms can be downloaded from **www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/smallbiz/newbusiness/hiring.htm**

Federal Employment Taxes exist in four specific forms: Federal Income tax, Social Security tax, Medicare tax, and Federal Unemployment (FUTA) tax. For more information about withholding requirements, payment schedules, and other compliance guidelines, see **www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/bus_info/emp_tax/index.html**

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Planning Ahead

NLU Courses for Directors

Spring Term begins
April 8, 2002

On-Campus Courses

ECE510 (3 s.h.)
Child, Family & Community

ECE593 (2 s.h.)
Seminar: Early Childhood
Early Childhood Education

EPS500A (3 s.h.)
Human Development with an
Emphasis on Early Childhood

FND503 (3 s.h.)
Historical & Philosophical
Foundations of Early Childhood
Education

On-line Courses

ECE512 (2 s.h.)
Early Childhood Curriculum

FND505 (2 s.h.)
Contemporary Issues in Education

For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Doug Clark at dclark@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7711

Professional Development Opportunities

Winter Management Institute

The Administration of Infant/Toddler Programs
March 8-9, 2002

This institute will help you develop an infant/toddler program that incorporates current knowledge about how children grow and learn with best practices in infant and toddler care and early education. It is being co-sponsored by the Ounce of Prevention Fund/Birth to Three Project & Workforce Development Commission.

Dr. Kay M. Albrecht, author of *Innovations: The Comprehensive Infant and Toddler Curriculum* will be guest presenter for this institute. Dr. Albrecht has received national attention for *HeartsHome*, her infant and toddler center.

Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University,
Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: $199, includes materials and food

Participants may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (The Administration of Infant and Toddler Programs) by paying an additional $448 and attending a follow-up session on May 1, 2002. This course is applicable to the core competency requirements for the Illinois Director Credential.

Directors' Technology Training

Made possible by funding from IDHS, the goal of Directors' Technology Training is to improve the computer skills of directors and increase their access to management resources through the Internet. Participants will learn the fundamentals of computer hardware, operating systems, word processing, spreadsheets, presentation graphics, database management, and the Internet.

This seven-session course is limited to 12 participants. Priority will be given to directors whose programs serve IDHS-funded children.

March 26, 27
April 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 2002
9:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
John A. Logan College, Carterville

Fee: $50, includes all course materials

Participants may earn 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE-534) by paying an additional $448. This course is applicable to the core competency requirements for the Illinois Director Credential.

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg at eeisenberg@nl.edu or (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703

Early Childhood Administration M.Ed. and C.A.S. Program

Enrollment now open to directors residing anywhere in the United States

To broaden its outreach to a national audience, National-Louis University's graduate degree program in Early Childhood Administration (ECA) will be offered in an on-line cohort format beginning in summer 2002. Building on the successes of the current ECA program model, the on-line cohort format will also be high-tech and high-touch. The 24-month sequence will convene in June 2002 for a two-week residency at NLU's Wheeling, Illinois campus and shorter follow-up residencies will take place at the midpoint and its culmination. The remainder of the ECA degree requirements will be delivered via on-line coursework, making this program accessible for early childhood administrators throughout the United States.

Offered by the NLU Department of Early Childhood Education, the Masters in Education (M.Ed.) sequence is a 34 s.h. option designed for students who have a baccalaureate degree. The Certificate of Advanced Study (C.A.S.) is a 30 s.h. option designed for students who already possess a master's degree in education.

As part of a cohort, students take the same courses and enjoy the advantage of being members of a strong learning community. For more information about the ECA on-line cohort program, write to ecaonline@nl.edu or call (800) 443-5522, ext. 7705.

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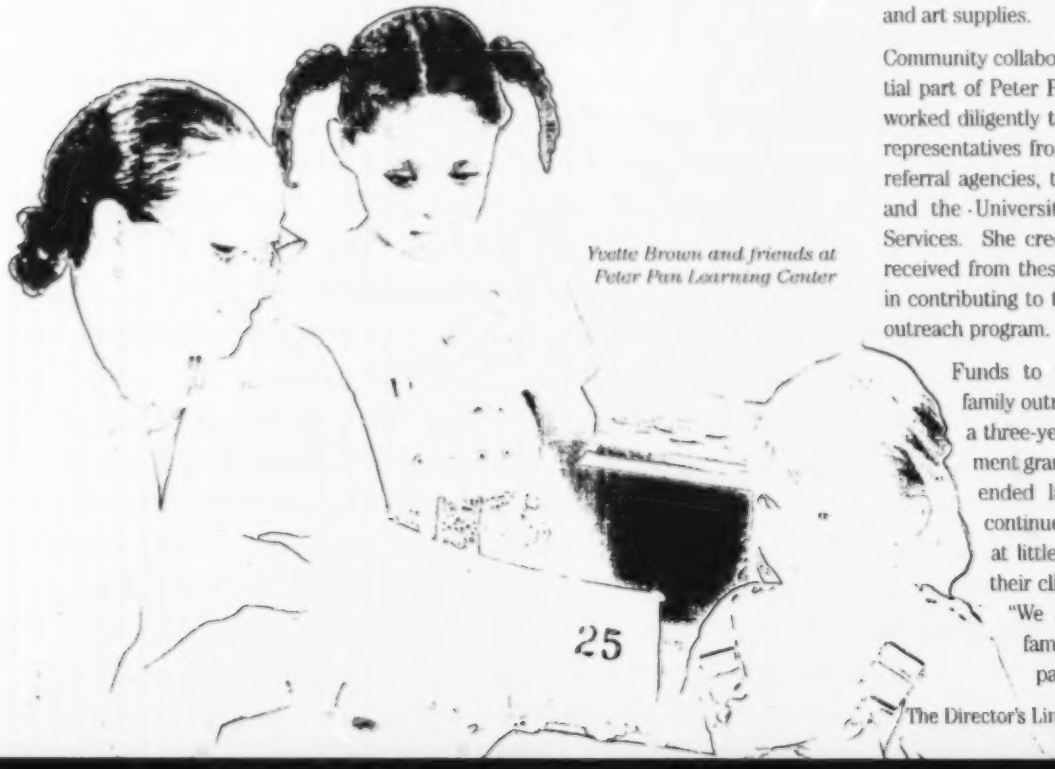
The Accreditation Corner

Are You Interested in Pursuing Accreditation? Funds May Be Available To Assist

During the past few years, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) has expanded its commitment to supporting center directors and family child care providers who are interested in improving the quality of their programs through accreditation. Administered through the state's local resource and referral agencies, IDHS has substantially increased financial assistance to centers and family child care homes pursuing accreditation by the following professional organizations:

- The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
  www.naeyc.org
  (202) 232-8777
- The National Early Childhood Program Accreditation Commission (NECPA) of the National Child Care Association
  www.necanet.org
  (800) 543-7161
- The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
  www.nafcc.org
  (800) 359-3817
- The National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA)
  www.nsaca.org
  (617) 298-5012
- The National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs of the National Association of Child Care Professionals (NACCP)
  www.naccp.org
  (512) 301-5557

To learn more about the accreditation guidelines for these organizations, contact them directly at the Web site or telephone number noted. To find out how you can apply for financial assistance to pursue accreditation, contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, call the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies at (800) 649-1884, or visit INCCRRA's Web site at www.ilchildcare.org.



Yvette Brown and friends at Peter Pan Learning Center

Family Friendly Practices

Peter Pan Learning Centers

Since opening its doors more than 35 years ago, Peter Pan Learning Center has become an integral part of the Champaign/Urbana early childhood professional community. "Our commitment is to serving families," says owner/director Yvette Brown. "We want parents and teachers working together for the good of the child."

Over the past three years, Yvette and her staff have undertaken several initiatives to put this goal into practice. Monthly parent workshops, computer playgroups, and family field trips are among the activities offered by Peter Pan. These efforts have fostered tighter bonds among families and staff by providing opportunities for closer parent-to-parent and parent-to-teacher relationships both in and away from the school. Families are equipped with information about child development and resources and services available in the community.

Many of the activities the center sponsors take place during evenings or on weekends to accommodate parents' schedules. Another extension to the program is a parent resource center that enables families to have access to educational toys, games, books, and art supplies.

Community collaboration has been an essential part of Peter Pan's mission. Yvette has worked diligently to make connections with representatives from the local resource and referral agencies, the public health district, and the University of Illinois Extension Services. She credits the support she has received from these individuals as essential in contributing to the success of her parent outreach program.

Funds to underwrite Peter Pan's family outreach activities came from a three-year IDHS quality enhancement grant. Even though the grant ended last summer, Peter Pan continues to offer these programs, at little or no additional cost to their clientele. As Yvette puts it, "We are committed to being family friendly. It's simply a part of who we are!"

Director's Profile

Mona Arend Chance encounter changes life forever

"All I ever wanted to do was to be a sixth-grade teacher," says Mona Arend of her aspirations as an undergraduate at University of Illinois. Earning a degree in elementary education in 1978, Mona embarked upon the career she had always wanted. Then, after four years on staff at a parochial school followed by another year as a junior high math teacher in the Crystal Lake public school system, she filled a summer break as a substitute teacher for a church-sponsored program in her community. Little did anyone expect that chance encounter would impact her in such a life-changing way. "I found my true calling," Mona recalls. "Until then, I hadn't realized how much learning young children really do!"

Instead of returning to teach at the junior high, Mona stayed on as a full-time teacher at Little People's Preschool and was promoted three years later to center director, a position she held for eight more years. In 1994, she was appointed as director of Woodstock Early Learning Center, McHenry County's largest private early childhood education program. Since then, thanks to Mona's commitment and effective leadership, the program at WELC has increased in meteoric fashion.

As part of a larger, multi-faceted community outreach organization, WELC is on the grounds of a 17-acre campus that is shared by a senior independent living center and nursing home. Against a backdrop that is tailor-made for intergenerational programming, Mona and her staff introduced a summer reading club a few years ago that connected school-age children from WELC and the residents of the neighboring retirement community. At first, the adults served only as "listeners" while the children practiced reading aloud. Highly successful, the program has now blossomed to actively involve the seniors as reading tutors for the young students.

Mona has fostered a visionary spirit among the governing board to whom she reports. Since joining WELC in 1994, Mona has spearheaded two facility expansion projects that have effectively doubled the center's capacity, one for school-age programming and later the addition of a wing for infant/toddler care. She has facilitated the writing of a mission statement by the board's executive team around which her organization operates. Last year, Mona was promoted to the post of Vice President for Early Childhood Programs in WELC's parent agency.

In her hours away from WELC, Mona is pursuing a master's degree in early childhood administration and enjoys her hobby as a dog trainer. In a unique marriage of those two interests, Cheyenne, Mona's pet Black Labrador is a licensed therapy dog that serves the retirement center residents and is a special member of the Woodstock Early Learning Center family... just one more example of how she has turned vision and innovation into action.

LEADERSHIP Connections

May 2-4, 2002 • www.nl.edu/cecl

Leadership Connections, a statewide conference especially designed for early childhood directors, will be held at the Marriott O'Hare Hotel, May 2-4, 2002. This three-day event is the perfect venue for early childhood leaders to hone their administrative skills and to be energized by opportunities for resource sharing and networking. Leadership Connections is hosted by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership of National-Louis University and is made possible by funding from The McCormick Tribune Foundation.

This year's conference will again feature national and international experts in early childhood and child development, business, law, medicine, advocacy, and other professional disciplines. Organizational strategist Stephen Lundin, author of the best selling book *FISH!*, will deliver the opening keynote address. Dr. Mona Lake Jones, poet laureate and author of *The Color of Culture*, will provide the keynote address at the closing luncheon. In-depth skill-building clinics and seminars will be conducted by Jerlean Daniel, Ed Greene, Luis Hernandez, Judy Harris Helm, Michael Brandwein, Robert Gatson, Marie McCarther, and many other distinguished presenters. The conference will also feature a public policy forum on the topic of Universal Access to Preschool.

Registration is now open and is limited to 400 attendees. For information about Leadership Connections, contact Ms. Jill Bella at the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, (800) 443-5522, ext. 7706 or jbella@nl.edu. A conference brochure can also be downloaded from the Center's Web site at www.nl.edu/cecl.

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